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This time, the good guys

America's leading spies have had a lot of trouble lately keeping secrets and looking like the good guys.

The Central Intelligence Agency has been porous with leaks about its clandestine activities in places like Central America. And when the leaks are disclosed, our spies usually seem to be on the wrong side of public opinion.

Now there has been one more leak in the CIA's sieve of protective silence — but this time it was on the right side.

Last Friday, in an operation that stayed secret for a few hours at best, U.S. Air Force transport planes airlifted 900 Ethiopian Jews, stranded as refugees in Sudan, to Israel.

The operation was planned by the CIA. Vice President Bush, a former CIA chief, reportedly negotiated the airlift with Sudanese officials — who, despite their official reluctance as members of the Arab League to aid or even recognize Israel, agreed to look the other way.

It wasn't much of a secret, but the operation worked. Now that our spies have come in from the cold as the good guys, they deserve a warm round of applause.